

IT'S GOOD!

Bears keep playoff hopes alive with 20-17 OT win over Packers **16**

Gifts riders can give
to the CTA **4**

'Wrestler' has nice
box office moves **30**

Low-key spots
high on flavor **21**



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Tuesday

DECEMBER 23, 2008

redeyechicago.com

A Chicago Tribune
publication

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REDEYE ILLUSTRATION



free
your.
mind

Feeling stressed out? Stop
thinking about it—why draining
your brain is good for you **6-7**

2do

To fail

Want to feel better about your mistakes? Check out ridiculous failures from mislabeled pictures to bad math and hilarious misspellings at failblog.org.

To see

Buy a shirt at myspace.com/veronared and get free admission to Verona Red's Jan. 2 show at Martyrs'. You'll also be entered to win dinner and drinks for two with the band.



To give

If you're looking for a gift for the next holiday party that's more original than a bottle of wine, pick up a gourmet caramel apple (\$26.95) from mrsprintables.com.

To wear

If you don't have an aunt who gives you terrible sweaters every holiday, you don't have to feel left out. Find plenty of revolting sweaters at uglysweaterstore.com.

Write a song for G-Rod

Want to perform live on WGN Midday News? Here's how.

Gov. Blagojevich says he runs because "it keeps love in your heart."

Inspired? Take the words "Keep Love In Your Heart" and create a song about G-Rod. For the entry to count, you need to send an actual song with actual singing or a video of you performing the song. We can't accept just lyrics.

Send songs to blagolove@yahoo.com; deadline is Jan. 5. Every song will be posted at redeyechicago.com. Our staff will choose finalists and a winner. And don't forget to keep love in your heart.

txtable

Aye, aye
caption

MONDAY'S WINNER:

"Even the birds in Detroit hate the Lions."

Look for another chance to submit a funny caption soon.



26 24

TODAY'S FORECAST

Snowy and windy, but at least the temp has two digits



WED.

34
17

More
snow



THU.

28
25

Cloudy
X-mas



FRI.

37
26

Maybe
rain or
snow



SAT.

32
24

Yup,
more
snow

What a face

After hundreds of nominations and tens of thousands of votes, RedEye's second annual "Chicago's Most Beautiful Dog" tourney was won by this adorable, and beautiful, 15-year-old pug named Jasmine (above).

Jasmine's owners are Gary, Mary, Christy, Melissa and Nathan Wong of Buffalo Grove. To relive the tourney and see all the nominated dogs, including our 32 finalists, go to redeyechicago.com/dogs.

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Discover a NuU for the Holidays!

Rice's ice



President Bush's foreign policies may be unpopular in the Middle East, but Arab leaders showered his top diplomat with jewelry.

Rice

While Bush himself didn't fare nearly as well, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice raked in at least \$316,000 in gem-encrusted baubles from the kings of Jordan and Saudi Arabia alone, making her one of top recipients among U.S. officials of gifts from foreign heads of state and government and their aides in 2007.

State Department documents break down some of the haul. **AP**

\$147,000

An emerald and diamond necklace, ring, bracelet and earrings from Jordan's King Abdullah II.

\$4,630

A necklace, earrings and jewelry box from Jordan's King Abdullah II and his wife, Queen Rania.

\$165,000

A ruby and diamond necklace with matching earrings from King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia.

WHAT DID BUSH GET?

From the same Arab leaders, Bush received just over \$100,000 in gifts in 2007, the State Department's list shows. He also got a \$150 bronze platypus paperweight from an Australian official.



Shoppers push their carts through the toy aisles in November at Costco in Cranberry, Pa. **AP FILE**

Let's make a deal

'You'd have to be a moron' not to bargain while you shop this year

Associated Press

NEW YORK If you're looking for an extra bargain before the holidays, you may only have to ask.

With holiday sales shaping up to be the lowest in years, possibly the worst since the industry began annual comparisons in 1969, retailers say they're taking consumers' demands for good deals seriously. Some are extending return policies, while others are matching competitors' prices. Many are volunteering on-the-spot discounts and even letting customers haggle prices down from what's marked in a desperate bid to make the cash register ring.

"You'd have to be a moron not to ask for a discount," said Stephen Hoch, a retailing

HAPPY RETURNS

Some retailers are giving consumers more wiggle room for returns instead of haggling over prices. Even Circuit City, which has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection, has extended its holiday return deadline to Jan. 31, said spokesman Jim Babb.

expert at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania.

More and more consumers are doing just that, treating a trip to the mall like a visit to the used car lot.

Allen Chen, a part-time cashier at a J. Crew store in White Plains, N.Y., said shoppers with two-month-old receipts are asking for partial refunds for items now on sale. Normally, the store's policy is to refund the difference between an item's purchase price and a later sale price only if it goes on sale within seven days of the purchase.

"When I tell them it is past the seven-day

policy, they tell me that they will just return it and re-buy it" at the sale price, he said, adding that his store managers are now allowing customers to do so most of the time.

Shoppers also are being far more savvy about asking retailers to match a competitor's lower price.

While shopping for Blu-ray discs at an L.A. Best Buy, Luis Levy used his cell phone to check the price at nearby competitors. Each disc was \$10 cheaper at Circuit City or Wal-Mart. Best Buy matched the lower prices.

Diana Thang, manager of Grace Jewelers near San Francisco's Union Square, said she and her staff are bargaining more than she ever has in two-plus decades in the business. But it's not working wonders.

"They have a budget," Thang said of most customers this season. "We give a low, low price and they still can't accept it. They're looking at more than \$1,000 stuff, and they want to spend \$200 or \$300."

3.9%

The percentage Illinois' population has risen—nearly 482,000 people—from April 2000 to July 2008, according to the Census Bureau. Illinois remains the nation's fifth-most-populous state, trailing California, Texas, New York and Florida. Utah is the nation's fastest-growing state. Its population climbed by 2.5 percent from July 2007 to July 2008.



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I don't hand out lumps of coal

I haven't owned a sleigh since I was 8.

Still, sometimes I feel like a CTA Santa, keeping an eye on the transit agency year-round. There certainly have been some mass transit missteps this year, but the agency seems to be trying to improve, ramping up the rollout of bus tracker, aggressively attacking slow zones and, last week, unveiling an impressive upgrade to transitchicago.com. That's why I dug deep into my virtual velvet bag and suggested a few gifts we riders can give the CTA.

Less littering from riders

Do you leave your crumpled newspaper behind on bus seats? Do you drop your Snickers wrapper on the "L" floor?

If you're riding dirty, it would be a great gift to the CTA and other riders if you'd stop this grimy Oscar the Grouch act for the holidays and beyond. You are needlessly thwarting the agency's obvious efforts to keep things clean on buses, trains and in stations. Take a public transit pledge to recycle and properly dispose of trash, so you won't land on this CTA Santa's "bad" list.

Send kudos along with complaints

Yes, I know. The CTA can be an annoying experience. Temperamental transit employees, molasses-slow buses and that nut case that always wants to sit right next to you, even though there are oodles of open seats. Still, try to use CTA feedback channels at ctahelp@transitchicago.com, feedback@transitchicago.com, and ctaboard@transitchicago.com to report the good along with the bad. I'm already seeing evidence of positive public transit runs in my inbox, so send a little sunshine the CTA's way.

More support in Springfield

Bah humbug! CTA fare hikes are right around the corner, taking some of our commutes up as much as 50 cents, depending on mode of travel and the type of fare media we use. But the agency—though it obviously needs to be both inventive and accountable for its revenue—needs state and federal support to get it to world-class status.

So when you're done penning letters commending CTA employees for their good behavior, let lawmakers know they need to invest in public transportation. That would be the greatest gift to give the agency for the upcoming Springfield session.

Reader letter day—yay!

[On the evening of Dec. 18], I was pleasantly surprised that the Santa Express had taken the place of my Purple Line train. The "elves" (CTA staff) gave us candy canes while the conductor welcomed us aboard and gave plenty of time to allow the rush hour crowds to run from the turnstiles and pack in. The best part was seeing the smiles on the faces of folks—mostly adults—watching the train go by or pull into their stop. I just wanted to say thanks to the CTA and the Holiday Train staff for brightening up a dreary time of year.

—JEN SCHMIDT, 29, ROGERS PARK

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Take a mental break

Stressed out? Try emptying your head for relief

By Tracy Swartz

REDEYE

All Joanie Schultz wants for the holidays is a cure for brain overload.

Schultz, 30, is experiencing the typical seasonal pressures: She has to shop for presents with less money than in years past and brave the busy airports to fly home to Aspen to see her family. On top of that, Schultz is directing "In Arabia We'd All Be Kings" at the Steep Theatre in Edgewater.

The play opens Jan. 15, with rehearsals running up to the holidays, then restarting after New Year's Day.

"I stress myself out," said Schultz of the West Loop. "It always gets worse this time of year with the holidays and the days getting shorter. It doesn't feel like I have as much free time."

Schultz said she typically unwinds through her weekly acupuncture appointment, hot baths and a glass of wine (red in the winter and white in the summer). But mostly she relies on the yoga class at her West Loop gym to help set her thoughts aside. "I always feel hugely relieved after that," she said.

Could emptying your head be the best medicine? Recent studies actually tout the benefits of not thinking. Among the findings: that resting makes people eat less, that forgetting information is crucial to mind function and that napping boosts memory.

This is good news for Chicago, named America's most stressful city by **forbes.com** in September. The magazine found that Chicago's unemployment rate, pricey gas, high population density and rather poor air quality "create a perfect storm of stress." Add holiday pressure to that equation and you've got an avalanche of angst.

While therapists and holistic healers say it is critical to relieve stress—especially to prevent a weakened immune system—one neuroscientist stressed the importance of picking the right time to let your brain slack.

"You wouldn't want your surgeon's mind

wandering," said Mark Jung-Beeman, a Northwestern associate professor of brain, behavior and cognition studies. "The optimal time for letting your mind relax is when you aren't making progress ... and your regular, focused thinking isn't helping you."

So if you're all stressed up with nowhere to go for the holidays, RedEye has compiled a list of sensible ways your brain can take a vacation.

Food for thought

Good news for couch potatoes: A Canadian study recently determined that intellectual tasks make people eat more than if they simply rested.

In the study, female students were split into three groups and asked to either relax in a sitting position, read and summarize a text or complete a series of computer tests. After the tasks, the students were invited to pig out. The students who rested ate 203 fewer calories than those who completed the reading-writing task and consumed 253 fewer calories than the students who did the computer work.

Researchers concluded the brain needs energy to function, and that mental tasks caused more fluctuation in glucose (sugar) levels than during the rest periods.

That's why you should avoid sugary soda to keep your brain relaxed and instead drink fruit juices, green tea and especially water, which is the "No. 1 way to relax your brain," said Souldancer of the Memor Spa in Naperville. Dehydration causes the body to secrete stress hormones.

No thanks for the memories

Can't remember what you did last night? Good thing. Scientists have found that forgetting bits and pieces of information will help you recall more significant facts in the future.

"We focus so much on memory that forgetting has been maligned," Gayatri Devi, a



neuropsychiatrist and memory expert in New York City, told the Wall Street Journal. "But if you didn't forget, you'd recall all kinds of extraneous information from your life that would drown you in a sea of inefficiency."

Sleep on the brain

You snooze, you lose your forgetfulness. In a study reported earlier this year, researchers from the City College of the City University of New York found that students who took a nap between taking memory tests had higher scores than students who watched TV between tests.

Naps are increasing in popularity among busy professionals. Earlier this year, the Kohler Waters Spa in Burr Ridge began offering a 60-minute massage with a 15-minute restorative nap service for \$150.

Kelly Kroemer of Naperville swears by

her daily naps. Kroemer, 32, said she typically takes a two-hour snooze after dropping her two sons off at school. "It helps a lot," Kroemer said. "It's good to sit back and relax and rest my brain."

Meditate and breathe

Just breathe. Classes at the Inner Metamorphosis University on the far North Side utilize a form of meditation called silent sitting. Participants sit in "a very wakeful state of being quiet," said Amona Buechler, an Inner Metamorphosis instructor. The technique involves focusing on sensing and feeling and not thinking. Meditators distance themselves from stressful thoughts to create a feeling of calmness and inspire constructive thinking in the future, Buechler said.

At the Stress Relief Center in Northbrook, director and founder Howard Weissman



“

The optimal time for letting your mind relax is when you aren't making progress ... and your regular, focused thinking isn't helping you.

MARK JUNG-BEEMAN

a Northwestern associate professor of brain, behavior and cognition studies

Our stress, second to no one

Oh, great. Like we don't have enough to worry about. **Forbes.com** in September rated Chicago the most stressful city in America. The Windy City bested New York, Detroit, L.A. and San Francisco.

So what causes Chicagoans to stress out? Harris Interactive, on behalf of the American Psychological Association, surveyed nearly 1,800 Chicagoans this past summer about their stress. Here's a look at the survey results by the numbers.

TRACY SWARTZ

50%

Say their amount of stress has increased in the past year



DAILY STRESS

76%

Say money is a significant source of stress

69%

Say the economy is a significant source of stress

66%

Say work is a significant source of stress

55%

Say housing costs, such as mortgage or rent, are a significant source of stress

» **27%**: Say their co-worker or boss is a source of daily or weekly stress

» **20%**: Say their spouse or partner is a source of daily or weekly stress

» **19%**: Say their son is a source of daily or weekly stress

» **17%**: Say their mother is a source of daily or weekly stress

MANAGING STRESS

76%

Say they manage stress extremely or somewhat well

58%

Say they listen to music to relieve stress

46%

Say they exercise or walk to relieve stress

45%

Say they watch TV or movies for more than two hours per day to relieve stress

said he teaches 6 to 10 different types of breathing techniques to calm the brain.

Beth Miller Kloss of New Lenox said she hasn't taken a class to meditate, but she's practiced deep breathing and "imagining my happy place" at home. Kloss found that meditation doesn't really help her relax her brain when she's thinking about major worries, such as paying her bills.

"It just depends on the situation," said Kloss, 30.

"When stressing about little stuff, it helps to distract me from that."

Strike a pose

At the Dahn Yoga Tai Chi Meditation studios in Chicago, practitioners engage in "brain respiration" through a five-step process designed to relax the brain with physical and mental exercises.

Stretching in a style similar to traditional yoga and martial arts awakens the body's senses, a gentle shaking of the body increases blood circulation and focusing on the mind creates more positive thoughts, said Melissa Koci, a Dahn yoga instructor in Arizona who previously worked at a Dahn center in Northbrook.

"Even after a few classes, people find that they are physically more relaxed, they can concentrate and they have more energy and hope for lasting changes," Koci said.

It's hypnotic

Hypnosis, which involves talking directly to the subconscious mind to change habits and patterns, creates a relaxed state and brain, said Rebecca Lauer, who owns Hypnosis Chicago in Streeterville.

People under hypnosis focus on one goal

or image and try to guide unnecessary data from their mind, Lauer said. The hypnotist quiets the patient's mind and relaxes his or her body, then adds mental imagery and positive suggestion. People who are hypnotized often sleep better, Lauer said, and their memory may improve as a result.

"Hypnosis is a great stress reliever," Lauer said. "It's meditation with a goal."

Austin Cook of Batavia said he's never tried hypnosis but he'd like to see if it works. Cook, 20, said he's heard mixed reviews from his friends about hypnosis.

"People I've talked to tried to do it to stop smoking. Some people said it worked. Some people said it didn't really work on them," Cook said.

"I'd like to see what it feels like to be hypnotized if it can be done."

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chicago



John Autullo, from the University of Chicago steam plant, on Monday works to fix a leaking pipe under the street. **NANCY STONE/TRIBUNE**

Obama's gray area



Chicago Tribune

President-elect Obama is looking more and more presidential every day—that's if you count the gray hairs.

Many

American presidents have transformed while they were in office from fresh-faced, energetic men with heads full of dark hair to gray-haired, aged versions of their former selves. Obama—not even in the White House yet—is sporting salt-and-pepper hair that lately has a lot more salt.

The assumption may be that the stress of the campaign trail and the transition—not to mention the weight of the country's problems on his shoulders—could have something to do with it. But does stress really cause gray hair?

It depends, said Dr. Heather Wickless, an assistant professor of dermatology at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine.

"Graying is poorly understood," she said.

"Some people go gray at a young age, so there is some genetics involved."

But some research shows that stress can damage melanocytes, or hair cells. The damaged cells then have trouble producing pigment, which keeps hair its original color, Wickless said. When the pigment disappears, the hair turns white, gray or silver, she said.

Diet and smoking can eventually affect hair color too, Wickless said. Obama, who has smoked in the past, has said he's been trying to kick the habit but admitted earlier this month that he's sneaked a few puffs.

And Obama, 47, like other presidents before him, is at the age that men typically start graying, Wickless said.

"Most men go gray in their mid-40s and continue graying into their 50s," she said.

"It could be the age group we are looking at. But I'm sure the stress of the presidency doesn't help matters."

Cruel, cruel winter

First the bone-numbing cold and now more snow and sleet

Chicago Tribune

Ugh, bleah and eeeeew.

Forecasters painted a portrait of misery for Tuesday afternoon, predicting 2 to 4 more inches of snow followed by sleet and freezing rain at night.

"It's just painful," said Dave Campbell, 45, a construction worker who worked outdoors on a steam condensation line at the University of Chicago for eight hours Monday. "The time goes by very slow. It's almost like having a real bad hangover. You know eventually the pain will be over, it's just not a good feeling."

Officials issued warnings and opened warming shelters.

So what about people who actually work outdoors? Well, they prepared the best they could.

WHAT TO EXPECT

According to the National Weather Service, a winter weather advisory is in effect from 4 a.m. Tuesday until 3 a.m. Wednesday. Snow is expected to start around sunrise Tuesday and continue through much of the day. About 2 to 4 inches is expected by evening before precipitation changes to sleet, freezing rain and eventually plain rain early Wednesday. Rain will change back to snow before ending Wednesday, but no significant accumulations are expected at this time.

Henry Casteel, a bell ringer for the Salvation Army, arrived at North Michigan Avenue on Tuesday wearing three pairs of socks, two pairs of pants, thermal long underwear, three sweaters, a hooded sweatshirt, a hat, a face mask and two pairs of gloves for his six-hour shift.

By midday he bought a third pair of gloves at a nearby Walgreens.

Incredibly enough, some 500 fans came

out in the cold to tailgate outside Soldier Field before Monday night's Bears-Packers game. Some stood on cardboard to lessen the chill of the concrete; others kept warm over open fire pits.

"This is what football's supposed to be," said Jeff Stevens, 52, of Rossville, Ind. A shipping manager for a frozen food company, he said 20 below zero is his daily workplace reality.

Packers fan Josh Baumann, 24, of Sheboygan, Wis., stood with a can of Miller Lite in one hand and a fork in the other. Instead of using the fork for food, he used it to consume a beer-turned-slushy in the frozen temperatures.

Joy Christopher, a 30-year-old credit manager in Chicago, also seemed unfazed by the frigid temps. Christopher said that during the last Bears-Packers at Soldier Field a year ago, her pants caught on fire when she stepped too close to a propane heater. She and another tailgater "just patted it out and kept going."



UPDATE US, WE'LL UPDATE YOU

For the latest weather updates, follow RedEye on Twitter at twitter.com/redeyechicago. And when you have weather news to report (a lengthy delay, snow accumulations, etc.), send them to us via Twitter.



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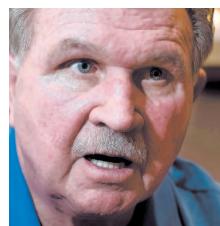
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Da new governor?



Ditka

Embarrassed by Gov. Blagojevich's fumbling performance, a Burr Ridge man has begun an Internet campaign aimed at yanking the governor from office and replacing him with former Bears coach Mike Ditka. And, no, the aforementioned man's name is not Bill Swerski. But he's most definitely a superfan.

Shaun Radecki, 27, launched dagovernor.com to persuade Iron Mike to lead Illinois. The site, which sells T-shirts, mugs and other fun stuff urging Ditka to run, lays out its platform in language that only a Bears fan can appreciate.

"We da people of Illinois are sick and tired of scumbag politicians who think dat it's their job to lie, cheat and steal," it reads. "We deserve somebody in charge who we can trust. Somebody who we can depend on. Somebody who we know understands the difference between right and wrong and won't be afraid to kick corruption in the [bleep] harder than da '85 Bears beat down da Patriots in da Super Bowl!"

Radecki said the idea came to him while discussing Blagojevich's arrest with a friend during a Bears game. Ditka seemed liked the obvious choice, given his tenacity, motivational skills and hero status in Illinois. No word from the tough-talking Ditka about the governor's office.

In other Blagojevich news on Monday: The impeachment committee ended its work for the week. Members plan to meet again Dec. 29.

Lt. Gov. Pat Quinn reassured the public that if he moves up to replace Blagojevich that the transition would be "seamless."

Blagojevich was at work in his office Monday.

REDEYE'S CAMPAIGNING TOO

We love Ditka just as much as the next guy, but RedEye's putting its hopes on another man who we know won't ever give you up.

Rick Astley. Yep. That Rick Astley. The one who won't say goodbye, tell a lie or hurt you.

See Rick's personal reply to RedEye and join the campaign at our Facebook group "Rick Astley for governor of Illinois" at <http://bit.ly/heBK>.



Chicago Police officer Carl Giangrosso removes police tape in front of a Marquette Park home Monday where two girls were killed in a house fire. **JOSÉ M. OSORIO/TRIBUNE**

2 kids die after being left alone

A mother left her four young children home alone Sunday to watch her boyfriend play in a pool tournament, returning early Monday to find two daughters dead in a fire that started in the family's Marquette Park basement residence, law enforcement sources said.

Police said Monday evening that they needed to interview another witness before deciding whether to bring charges against the mother, whose son and other daughter were pulled alive from the burning home in the 7200 block of South Troy Street by two police officers.

Carla Gonzalez, 9, and her sister Perla, 6, died in the blaze, school officials said.

The fire, which began around 1 a.m., is being classified as accidental, probably caused by an electrical overload, Fire

Department spokesman Larry Langford said. It started in the basement, where the victims' bodies were found, he said.

Next-door neighbor Denoris Williams, 31, said he returned from a friend's home early Monday when he saw smoke pouring from his neighbor's first-floor bathroom window and heard a boy crying that he wished he had a telephone to call his mother.

Williams called 911 and then ran next door to ring the doorbell, hoping to wake anyone else still inside the home.

At around the time of the fire, the children's mother was in an idling van parked outside the home, a police source and neighbors said. She came out yelling, "My kids, my kids!" Williams said.

Man falsely reports bank robbery

A Bolingbrook man who was upset with Bank of America was arrested Monday after he called 911 and falsely reported a robbery at the bank, Bolingbrook police said.

John Pighee Jr., 58, was taken into custody around 11:45 a.m. after officers arrived at the bank and caught him still inside. Pighee Jr. never intended to rob the bank but instead wanted to disrupt the bank's daily activities,

Gambling in Des Plaines

The Illinois Gaming Board on Monday awarded the state's remaining casino license to Midwest Gaming LLC, which plans to build in Des Plaines. Midwest beat out competitors looking to locate in Rosemont or Waukegan with an upfront bid of \$125 million and a promise of an additional \$10 million for each of the next 30 years.

City inspector sentenced

A supervising inspector in the Chicago Buildings Department was sentenced Monday to 21 months in prison by U.S. District Judge Robert Gentlemen for pocketing a bribe of \$500. A federal jury convicted Gregory Toran in August of attempted extortion. He was snared in a videotaped sting after an inspector under his supervision cooperated with authorities and passed him a \$500 bribe from a purportedly corrupt contractor.

Woman dies in South Side crash

A 22-year-old female passenger died Monday after the car she was riding in struck a pole, police said. Kim Kayler, of the 5600 block of South Seeley Avenue, was the victim, according to the Cook County medical examiner's office. The driver of the vehicle in the single-car crash became distracted and went off the road about 2 a.m. in the 500 block of West 69th Street, police said.

FBI presses on 'Button Bandit'

The FBI is looking for a man described as the "Button Bandit" in connection with the robberies of at least two Chicago banks. He got the nickname because he has told bank employees "Don't hit any buttons" during each of the robberies. Both robberies were at TCF Bank branches, the first Sept. 30 at 4729 N. Central Ave. and the second Oct. 14 at 1341 N. Paulina St., the agency said. Anyone with information should call 312-421-6700.

according to Lt. Ken Teppel.

Pighee is being processed at the Bolingbrook Police Station for disorderly conduct. The Will County State's Attorney's Office is reviewing the case, Teppel said.

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G - General audience **PG** - Parental guidance suggested
PG-13 - Parents strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13
R - Restricted, under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian
NC-17 - No one 17 and under admitted

600 N. MICHIGAN (AMC)

600 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago
(312) 255-9340

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AMC Select - The best specialty films

- **Seven Pounds** (PG-13) 1:00,2:00,4:00,5:00,7:00,8:30,10:00
- **Yes Man** (PG-13) 1:45,4:30,7:30,10:20
- **Earth Stood** (PG-13) 2:40,5:30,7:10,8:15,9:50,10:45
- **AMC Select Cadillac Rec** (R) 1:30,4:10,6:45,9:30
- **Four Chris** (PG-13) 3:00,5:20,7:50,10:10
- **Bolt** (PG) 2:10,4:40
- **Twilight** (PG-13) 1:20,4:20,7:40,10:40
- **Quantum-Sol.** (PG-13) 2:20,4:50,7:20,10:30

LANDMARK CENTURY CENTRE CINEMA (LANDMARK)

2828 North Clark St., Chicago
(773) 509-4949

- **Doubt** (PG-13) 1:55,3:10,4:45,6:30,7:35,9:40,10:10
- **Milk** (R) 1:30,2:40,4:30,6:20,7:30,9:30,10:30
- **Slumdog Mill** (R) 1:45,3:00,4:40,6:15,7:45,9:20,10:40
- **Let the Right** (H) 1:50,4:50,7:40,10:25

CITY NORTH 14 (KERASOTES)

2600 N. Western Ave.
(800) 326-3264 #1642

Tale of Desp (G)

★ 10:00,11:00,12:30,1:30,3:00,4:00,5:30,6:30,7:50,9:00,10:20

Yes Man (PG-13)

★ 10:50,11:30,1:40,2:20,4:20,5:00,7:00,9:45,10:30

Seven Pounds (PG-13)

1:20,2:20,4:10,2:20,4:30,4:40,3:30,4:30,5:30,6:50,7:30,10:00,10:40

Earth Stood (PG-13)

★ 11:20,1:10,2:00,4:10,5:00,6:45,7:20,9:20,10:10

Nothing Like (PG-13)

★ 11:40,2:20,4:40,7:10,9:40

Cadillac Rec (R)

7:15,9:50

Four Chris (PG-13)

1:00,1:40,2:00,3:30,6:10,8:30,10:50

Twilight (PG-13)

9:45,12:45,3:50,6:40,9:30

Bolt in 3D (PG)

10:30,12:50,3:20,6:20,9:10

Quantum-Sol. (PG-13)

9:50,12:20,2:20,5:50,5:20,8:00,10:45

Madagascar 2 (PG)

10:10,12:10,2:40,5:10

DAVIS THEATRE (VALUE)

4614 N. Lincoln Ave., Chicago
(773) 784-0893

Yes Man (PG-13)

12:45,3:00,5:20,7:40,9:50

Slumdog Mill (R)

12:20,2:45,5:10,7:30,10:00

(continued)

DAVIS THEATRE (VALUE) (continued)

- **Four Chris** (PG-13) 12:15,2:15,4:15,6:15,8:15,10:15
- **Quantum-Sol.** (PG-13) 1:00,3:15,5:30,7:45,10:00

FORD CITY 14 (AMC)

S. Cicero at 76th, Chicago
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- **Tale of Desp** (G) 1



1 Lottery celebration

Juan Fernandez won a portion of Spain's "El Gordo" (The Fat One) lottery on Monday, so he celebrated in Barcelona by shaving the winning numbers into his new haircut. Fernandez's ticket and 1,950 others were worth \$418,000. **AP PHOTO**

2 Shoe thrower twist

Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki moved Monday to undermine the popularity of the Iraqi who threw his shoes at President Bush, saying the journalist confessed that the mastermind of the attack was a militant known for slitting his victims' throats.

3 Blame game

Pakistan is shifting blame and responsibility for last month's deadly attacks in Mumbai, India's foreign minister charged Monday in New Delhi, adding that Delhi would take action against the perpetrators if Islamabad failed to.

4 He's OK

After experiencing pain in his left shoulder recently, President Bush had an MRI on Monday and it was determined he needed a cortisone shot and nothing more.

5 Actor cleared of murder

Former "Sopranos" actor Lillo Brancato was cleared Monday of second-degree murder in the 2005 shooting death of an off-duty policeman in New York. Brancato was convicted of a lesser charge of attempted burglary.

6 Garden reopens

The Atlanta Botanical Garden reopened three days after a construction accident at the site of a bridge under construction killed one worker and injured 18 others.



7 pounds

Looks like Will Smith isn't the only person in the news for something titled 7 pounds. This time, a 23-year-old student from Lake Grove, N.Y., is for downing this much in potato latkes in eight minutes—46 to be exact. The previous record, set in 2006, was only 31 latkes.

What happened on runway?

7 DENVER Investigators took photos and measurements at the charred wreckage of a Continental Airlines jet Monday, searching for clues about why the plane veered off a runway and skidded into a shallow ravine.

The twin-engine Boeing 737-500 still sat in a shallow, snow-covered ravine where it came to rest after its aborted takeoff Saturday at Denver International Airport.

National Transportation Safety Board investigators made preliminary reviews of the cockpit voice recorder and the flight data recorder on Sunday, agency

spokesman Peter Knudson said.

No information has been released, but Knudson said "we do have good data" from the recorders.

Investigators planned to interview the captain and the first officer later Monday. Both had clean safety records with the Federal Aviation Administration, FAA spokesman Ian Gregor said.

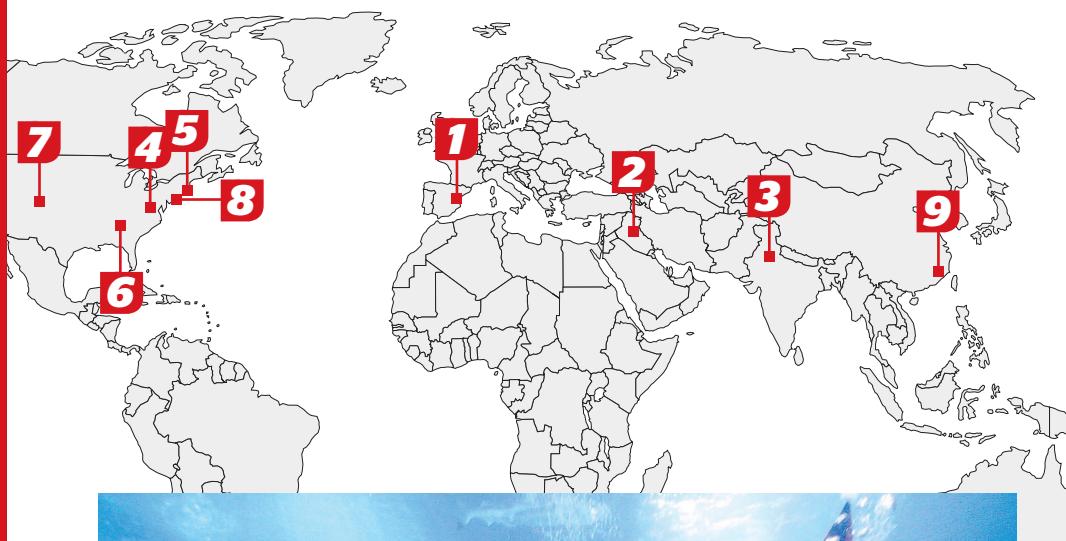
The latest accident forced the 115 passengers and crew aboard Flight 1404 to flee through emergency exits as the plane burned. The entire right side of the jet was burned, and melted plastic from overhead

compartments dripped onto the seats.

Thirty-eight people suffered injuries, including broken bones. Officials weren't sure whether injuries were caused by the impact or the evacuation.

Passenger Kristina Beagle, 22, of Houston told CBS' "Early Show" that she thought the plane was close to takeoff speed and felt like it was in the air before it slammed along the ground.

"It was like we were in a movie," she said. "People were screaming and once I heard the people scream, I realized, oh, my gosh, we're crashing."



Underwater carolers

9 Santa Clauses perform with musical instruments Sunday in a turtle aquarium at an ocean park in Fuzhou, located in China's Fujian province. Chinese characters in the background read "Merry Christmas." **AP PHOTO**

5 convicted in N.J. plot

8 CAMDEN, N.J. Five Muslim immigrants were convicted Monday of plotting to massacre U.S. soldiers at Ft. Dix in a case that tested the FBI's post-Sept. 11 strategy of infiltrating and breaking up terrorist conspiracies in their earliest stages.

The men could get life in prison when they are sentenced in April.

The five, who lived in and around Philadelphia for years, were found guilty of conspiring to kill U.S. military personnel. But they were acquitted of attempted murder, after prosecutors acknowledged the men probably were months away from an attack and did not necessarily have a specific plan. Four defendants also were convicted of weapons charges.

The federal jury deliberated for 38 hours over six days.

"These criminals had the capacity and had done preparations to do serious and grievous harm to members of our military," Ralph Marra, the acting U.S. attorney for New Jersey, said after the verdict.

But some Muslim leaders in New Jersey disputed that.

"I don't think they actually mean to do anything," said Mohamed Younes, president of the American Muslim Union. "I think they were acting stupid, like they thought the whole thing was a joke."

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Disgraced investor enjoyed the high life

Wall Street Journal

In his rise to the top, Bernard Madoff always stayed just under the radar.

He owns shares of two jets, both in the name of a private aviation company. He has a penthouse in Manhattan, an oceanfront home in the Hamptons and a dwelling in Palm Beach, Fla., but by the standards of the business circles he moves in, they aren't conspicuous. His 55-foot fishing boat, "Bull," is similarly modest.

There's nothing modest about his current situation. Madoff—who was arrested Dec. 11 amid allegations he operated a \$50 billion Ponzi scheme—recently was ordered by a judge to remain under 24-hour surveillance and not leave his Manhattan apartment.

During a Wall Street career that began in 1960 and ended Dec. 10 when he allegedly confessed about the Ponzi scheme to his two sons, Madoff attained fame and fortune with his connections, ingenious marketing and a carefully cultivated image. Referred to as "Uncle Bernie" by friends and investors, he was chairman of the Nasdaq Stock Market, trustee for numerous charities and a legend at country clubs from Palm Beach to Long Island.

Madoff, now 70, also was highly private and sometimes uncomfortable in social settings, according to friends, colleagues and investors. He could be gruff to the people who gave him money to invest, threatening to expel those who asked too many questions.

"There is this image of Bernie as this really outgoing, sweet guy with all these accolades,"

DE-FRIENDED

Facebook removed a page dedicated to Bernard Madoff on Monday after some users posted comments complimenting and jeering his alleged \$50 billion fraud, a spokesman said. The page, which described Madoff's interests as "destroying wealth," claimed 1,226 fans. **BLOOMBERG**

said Richard Spring, one of Madoff's unofficial sales agents in Florida. "But he's actually fairly quiet and almost uncomfortable around other people."

Throughout the 1990s, Bernard L. Madoff Securities—the firm Madoff built on Wall Street—rode the bull market in stocks. Madoff once sprang for a weekend in Montauk for most of the firm's more than 200 employees in New York, including hotel rooms, a beach party, lobster dinner and touch football.

Few of those employees knew much about Madoff's side business, managing money.

While accessible to his trading clients, Madoff was elusive to the individual investors whose money he managed. While some met him briefly on the golf course or at occasional social gatherings, Madoff had an unspoken rule that he wouldn't discuss investments in social settings, according to investors.

As Madoff's reputation and cash pile grew, so did his lifestyle. He took vacations in southern France, according to two friends. His home in Palm Beach is tucked behind groomed hedges and palm trees.

But that all came toppling down in an alleged fraud that may end up costing investors \$50 billion. Prosecutors say Madoff was operating a massive Ponzi scheme, in which original investors are paid off by those who join later. Investors included a charity of director Steven Spielberg. **AP CONTRIBUTED**



Madoff



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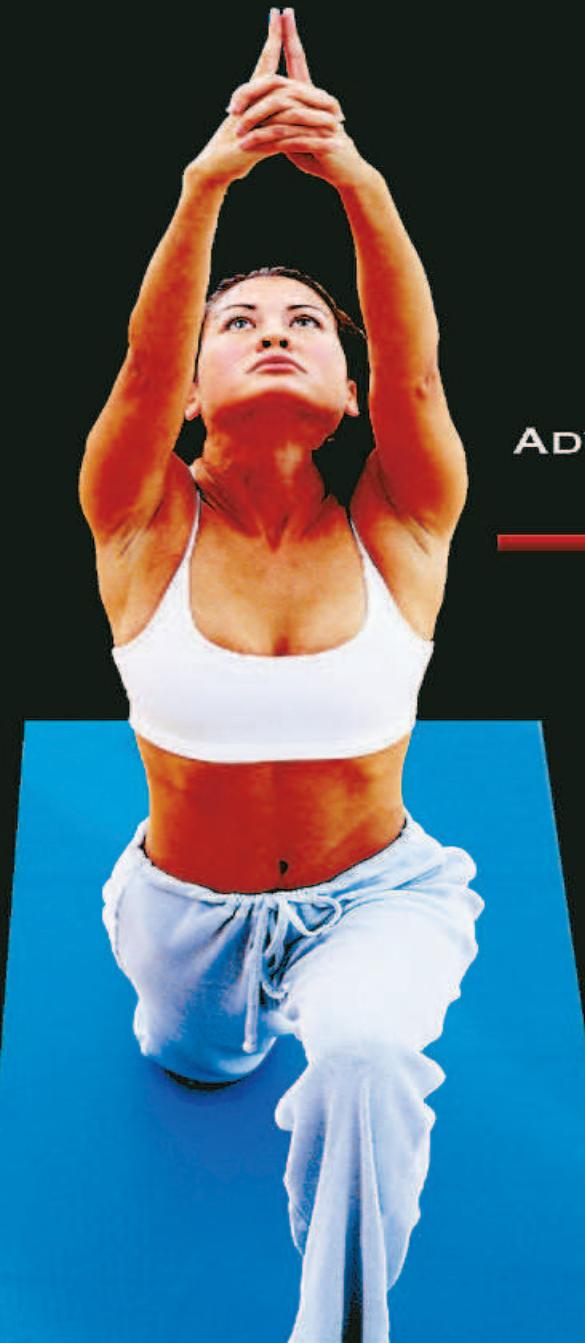
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BRRRLIEVE

BEARS STILL IN PLAYOFF PICTURE AFTER THRILLING OT VICTORY

Associated Press

Robbie Gould kicked a 38-yard field goal with 11:28 left in overtime and the Bears overcame frigid conditions and the Green Bay Packers for a 20-17 victory Monday night to stay in the running for the playoffs.

The Bears' Alex Brown blocked Mason Crosby's 38-yard field-goal attempt with 18 seconds left in regulation to preserve a 17-17 tie and send the game into overtime.

The temperature at Soldier Field was announced at 2 degrees, making it the coldest home game in Bears' history since records started being kept in 1963. The wind chill was 13 below, the second lowest in recorded team annals, so the longtime rivals known for their ability to play in cold weather were tested by the elements.

Kyle Orton hit a 17-yard pass to Greg Olsen and a 15-yard penalty on Green Bay's Aaron Rouse for a horse collar tackle gave the Bears the ball at the Green Bay 35 in overtime. A third-down pass of 14 yards to Matt Forte got it to the Green Bay 20 to set up the winning kick—Gould's second straight game-winner in overtime.

Forte came up big in the end after being held to 20 yards rushing through the first three quarters.

Trailing 17-10, the Bears had just taken over at their 49 when Forte broke off a 28-yard run around the left side and followed that with an 8-yarder, putting the ball on the Packers 15. On fourth down at the 4, he plowed through for a first down. Green Bay decided not to challenge the spot, and Forte ran it in for the tying touchdown.

The Packers then took over on the Bears 35 after a 28-yard kickoff return by Will Blackmon and an unnecessary roughness penalty against Adrian Peterson after

ROAD TO THE PLAYOFFS

- » If the Bears win Sunday at Houston and Minnesota loses to the Giants, the Bears win the NFC North.
- » If the Bears and Minnesota both win Sunday, the Bears can still make the playoffs if Dallas and Tampa Bay both lose.

he stepped out of bounds. Green Bay then drove to the 20, before Crosby's field goal got blocked with 18 seconds left.

The Packers were leading 14-10 through three quarters after Aaron Rodgers threw for 226 yards and two touchdowns.

Rodgers hit Greg Jennings midway through the second quarter to break a scoreless tie and added a 17-yarder to Ryan Grant that made it 14-3 later in the period as the Packers heated up on a frigid night.

With their playoff hopes flickering, the Bears made it a four-point game on Kyle Orton's 3-yard pass to Greg Olsen early in the third quarter after Brad Maynard's punt deflected off a Green Bay player, keeping the drive going.

But Charles Woodson picked off Kyle Orton near midfield and returned it to the Bears 30 late in the third.

That set up a Mason Crosby 28-yard field goal, and with the Bears in Green Bay territory, Nick Collins picked off Orton at the 11.

The Bears' (9-6) big breaks came over the weekend, with NFC North leader Minnesota losing along with Dallas, Tampa Bay and Philadelphia.

That kept the Bears in the running for both the division title and a wild-card berth, but on a frozen field, both teams had trouble warming up.



Bears' kick returner Danieal Manning returns a kickoff for 71 yards, past the Green Bay Packers' Will Blackmon (left) and Jarrett Bush (right) on Monday night. AP

IT

**BEARS 20
PACKERS 17**
overtime



Of all the nights for overtime ...

Yes, Monday night's Bears-Packers game was cold. Everyone in the city knows that. It could have been worse, though. Take a look: **REDEYE**

IT WAS SO COLD ...

... the Packers visited Wrigley Field to conduct pregame warmups on the hockey rink being built for the Winter Classic.

... ingenious fans used ice-filled coolers to soak their feet in—to get them warmer!

... tailgaters used their red-hot barbecues as earmuffs.

... vendors were selling cups of warm beer. Mmmmm.

... even G-Rod's hot seat had trouble maintaining its temperature.

... real Bears were wearing fur coats on top of their own.

... Devin Hester was stopped cold. Oh, wait ...

Feels like the first time

ESPN never met a football broadcast cliche it didn't beat to death. Monday night's game gave the network ample ammo: Historic rivals meet with the playoffs on the line and the weather producing historically cold conditions. Here are some moments we expected to see and how long it took ESPN to talk about or show them after the 7:30 p.m. start.

First use of the word "frigid"
Less than 1 minute

First mention of former Green Bay quarterback Brett Favre
4 minutes

First joke about the cold weather from ESPN's Tony Kornheiser
14 minutes

First Christmas reference
18 minutes

First mention of the ice rink being built at Wrigley Field
20 minutes

First close-up image of a bundled-up fan
21 minutes

First image of a shirtless/underdressed fan
49 minutes

First video of inspirational talk from a coach/motivational speaker
1 hour, 27 minutes

No video, but a mention of the Bears needing a motivational halftime speech

Bears for all seasons

As football season draws toward a close, we asked our Twitter followers how they are feeling about the Bears and their chances to make the playoffs. Here are some responses. Want to play for team RedEye? Try out at twitter.com/redeyechicago



"Bears season has been turbulent—a lot like the economy." **ATLAUA**

"The 2008 season was like going to a strip club. Enough to get you excited, but in the end you're left feeling blue." **THEMIKEPHILLIPS**

"Bears season of missed opportunities and wouldacouldashouldas. Poor lackluster effort from players/coaches. Much to improve." **SALKOVER**

"While still not perfect, it looks like the Bears are on their way to a legit offense. Happy day!" **KAPGAR**

"Fickle. One minute they're up, the next they're down. They grab the lead & get sloppy--ATL Falcons anyone?" **FREEANDFLAWED**

I expected 7-9. With no WRs, I think they've had a good season. We'll see how I feel after freezing my rear off [Monday night]. **DONKEYPUNCHER**

"It is pretty annoying how 'fair weather' the fans up here are. W/o Farve (and no playoff) no one even is tuning in tonight!" **CHARLES_AH_UM**

"Wasted season. They played poorly at the beginning of the season and never managed to get it back together." **KIMBEAN**

Readers step on their soapbox about the state of Chicago sports. You can join them online at twitter.com/redeyechicago, via e-mail to redeyesports@tribune.com or by texting "whiz" and your comment to **47383**.

Freeze tag

Tracy went to Monday night's Bears game, and it was a chilly reception to say the least. Ugh.



TOPIC	JIMMY GREENFIELD jgreenfield@tribune.com	LEO EBERSOLE lebersole@tribune.com	TRACY SWARTZ tswartz@tribune.com	BRIAN MOORE brmoore@tribune.com	RAHULA STROHL rstrohl@tribune.com
1 You know the drill: Make a prediction before Monday's Bears-Packers game.	Bears 24, Packers 6.	Whether he plays or not, Grossman's passer rating will be lower than the temp.	Like this Florida girl, the Bears can't drive in the snow.	The broadcasting crew will mention the cold less than 30 seconds into their coverage.	I predict the game will be over by the time most people read this.
2 Figuring out NFL playoff scenarios is more complicated than discerning whether or not Michael Jackson still has a nose.	... rocket surgery.	... deciphering Charlie Weis' decided schematic advantage at the Cracker Barrel buffet.	... comprehending Tracy's Five on Five answers.	... nothing. If you want to make the NFC playoffs, beat NFC teams. The Bears didn't.
3 Are you on the Blackhawks bandwagon?	Sir, I am the leader of the band. Or the wagon, depending on what a bandwagon is.	It's going to take a while for me. I just recently adopted the '90s-era Washington Capitals.	Nope, the wheels and fans fell off the wagon years ago. AA, captain!	Since the Cubs bandwagon crashed and burned, I'm holding off for now.	Is that the one where you keep drinking? If so, yes.
4 Invent a winter sport that could be played only in Chicago.	Hancockey. It involves jumping, falling, a pool of water and the Hancock building.	Kickbackball.	Spongee: hockey with a sponge. But most Chicago guys aren't spongee-worthy.	Side Street Steeplechase. Dodge unplowed snow and chairs reserving parking spots.	The U.S. Cellular Frozen Shot Rocket Round Robin Classic.
5 Best of 2008: Which Chicago athlete had the best performance this year?	Zambrano for his no-hitter. Especially considering he was awful before and after it.	Robbie Gould, who also wins "Best Imitation of Fred Savage."	Jo Noah had the most depth in his position.	A tie between Drew Gooden and Kyle Orton for Outstanding Achievement in Facial Hair.	Derrick Rose. For that apple knife thing, not for his basketball skills.

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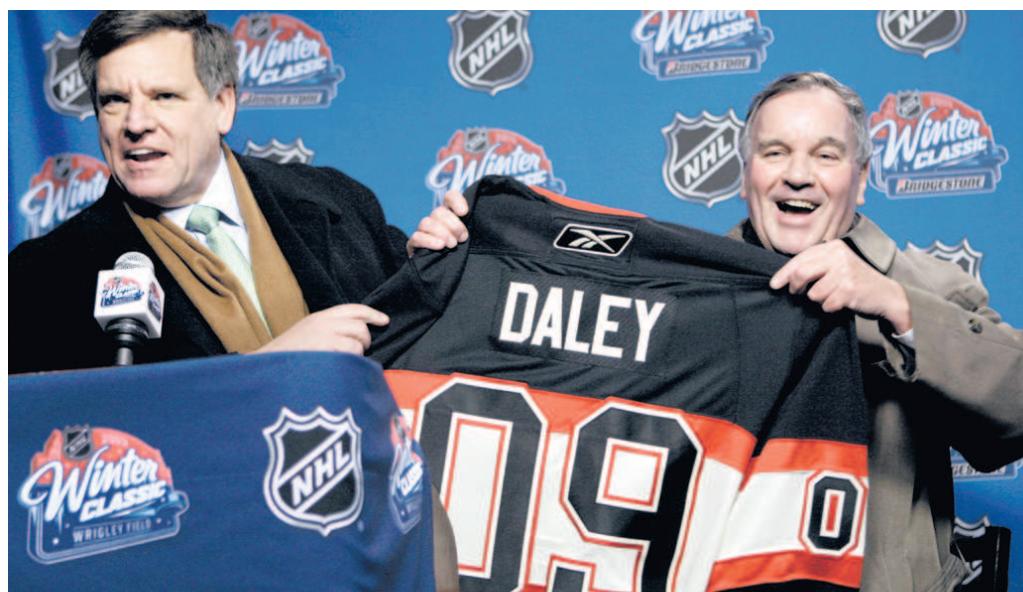
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WINTER CLASSIC

Blackhawks Chairman Rocky Wirtz (left) presents Mayor Daley with a personalized jersey at Monday's news conference at Wrigley Field. **APPHOTO**

Daley tours Wrigley

With temperatures hovering near zero Monday and the city of Chicago closing down its park district ice-skating rinks due to the extreme cold, Mayor Daley toured the ice rink at Wrigley Field in advance of the NHL Winter Classic.

The game on New Year's Day will pit the Blackhawks, the NHL's hottest team with seven straight victories, against the defending Stanley Cup champ Detroit Red Wings.

There was a bit of a different look to the Friendly Confines as Daley walked around the temporary rink, with snow piled high and the traditional ivy on the outfield walls hibernating for the winter.

"As the first hockey game to be played at Wrigley Field, this game is already part of Chicago sports history," Daley said.

The mayor also had an eye toward the city's pursuit of the 2016 Summer Olympic Games.

"It's really a combination of how people really love their sports in Chicago, a great sports town," Daley said. "It really shows how we work with

HAWKS HITS

There was a lot of spring in the Blackhawks' step at practice Monday—a seven-game winning streak will do that—but no one looked happier than Adam Burish. The forward practiced with his teammates for the first time since breaking the big toe on his right foot late last month. The injury has caused him to miss 12 games.

transportation, parking, access to and from the stadium, security, how it all works together ... and handling large crowds as well."

Officials say 240,000 people have entered a lottery for the 40,000-plus available seats. The Blackhawks were in the bottom third in NHL attendance last year but currently lead the league in per-game average attendance.

The build-out of the rink is on schedule, according to the NHL. The rink still needs an additional 20,000 gallons of water to create more ice, and some 350 gallons of paint.

Fan charged for tackling Seau

A spectator who tackled New England Patriots linebacker Junior Seau on the sidelines during the team's game Sunday has been charged with trespassing and assault and battery. Todd Kobus, 31, of Attleboro, Mass., made an initial court appearance Monday, when a pretrial hearing was set for Feb. 17.

Reporter apologizes to coach for question

Detroit News columnist Rob Parker, who asked Lions coach Rod Marinelli if he wished his daughter married a better defensive coordinator, taking a shot at his son-in-law Joe Barry, apologized to Marinelli and his family by phone Monday. Marinelli said Monday that Parker crossed a line by attacking his daughter.

Yi's age being investigated

New Jersey Nets player Yi Jianlian is being investigated by a magazine that claims he is lying about his age on official documents. The Chinese-language edition of Sports Illustrated said the magazine found records from Yi's middle-school registration that said he was born in 1984. His official basketball records say he was born in 1987.



**watch
dog**

WHIZZER
redeyesports
@tribune.com

HOMETOWN HITS

Illinois defensive back Vontae Davis has decided to skip his senior season and enter the 2009 NFL draft.

UPCOMING GAMES

- » Northwestern vs. Southern Methodist University, 7 p.m. Tuesday
- » University of Illinois-Chicago at Toledo, 6 p.m. Tuesday

MONDAY'S RESULTS

- » Loyola of Chicago 89, SIU-Edwardsville 65
- » Chicago State 77, Eastern Illinois 64
- » Southern Illinois 64, Western Michigan 46

txtable

Best, worst of '08

We want you to help pick the highs and lows in Chicago sports this past year. Here's the ballot.

BEST TEAM

1. Bears
2. Blackhawks
3. Cubs
4. Fire
5. White Sox
6. Wolves

Text "team" and the number of your choice to **47383**.

**BULLS AT DETROIT**

7 p.m. WGN
The Pistons might play football better than the Detroit Lions.

POINSETTIA BOWL

7 p.m. ESPN
Boise State is 12-0 but has no shot at a title. Why doesn't college football have a playoff again?

COLLEGE BASKETBALL**MISSOURI VS. ILLINOIS**

6:30 p.m. ESPN2
While we've been obsessing over the Bears, the Fighting Illini have gone 10-1.

BIGGEST LETDOWN

1. Cubs swept in playoffs
2. Devin Hester
3. Joakim Noah
4. Rush shuts down for 2009
5. White Sox lose in first round



Text "ouch" and the number of your choice to **47383**.

BEST MOMENT

1. Bulls get Derrick Rose
2. Cubs clinch division for 2nd straight year
3. Fire gets Chicago-area native Brian McBride
4. Northwestern makes first bowl game since 2005
5. White Sox win playoff play-in game



Text "best" and the number of your choice to **47383**.

BEST COMEBACK

1. Bears running game
2. Blackhawks
3. Ryan Dempster
4. Kyle Orton
5. Kerry Wood



Text "come" and the number of your choice to **47383**.

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metromix



Haute cuisine? Ha!

From jambalaya to falafels, these are the addictions we were happy to have this year

By the Metromix staff

We've had Belgian beers and pork aplenty at The Bristol and The Publican. We've swooned over notable chefs at L20 and Graham Elliot. And we loved the alfresco scenes at Piccolo Sogno and Perennial.

However, our tastes are simple and our pocketbooks small. As amazing as these high-profile spots are, they weren't where we regularly quelled our hunger pangs. New in '08, these low-key spots are where we frequently found ourselves dining.

Dawali

4911 N. Kedzie Ave.
773-267-4200

With all due respect to neighboring Middle Eastern restaurants Semiramis, Salam and Al-Khaymeih, we've got a new love. Dawali Mediterranean Kitchen, a counter-service spot that's got a familiar menu of kebabs, shawarma and hummus, opened quietly in June and we've been steadily seeing her ever since.

Addiction: The falafel sandwich (\$4.25)—which includes potato, eggplant, cauliflower and a tomato salad, unlike the standard falafel sandwich—is made to order and the best we've had. Plus, we've convinced ourselves that it makes for a healthy dinner.

Quirk: This spot has more granite surfaces than one of Chaz Walters' hot properties.



90 Miles Cuban Cafe

3101 N. Clybourn Ave. 773-248-2822

Owner Alberto Gonzalez probably is about to stage an intervention, he's seen us in this almost 4-month-old Cuban spot so many times. But we're not going quietly. The Cuban sandwiches, easy on the wallet and always served super hot, are a hard habit to break.

Addiction: Gonzalez's own twist on the classic lechon sandwich (\$6.50). It's stacked with the traditional roasted pork, grilled onions and garlic mojo, but there's one game-changing difference: He adds sweet plantain.

Endearing quirk: The best "wallpaper" of any joint in town. The dining room is plastered with vintage ads, photos and posters from pre-Castro Cuba.



Late Night Thai
FILE FOR METROMIX

Tumbao Bar & Grill

3213 W. Armitage Ave.

773-772-9800

This Latin-inspired spot, which opened quietly in February in Logan Square, just a few blocks west of Street Side, serves up live salsa music on Saturday nights and spicy eats such as grilled shrimp doused in a mango-rum sauce. We can't stop thinking about their solid 'ritas and sangria, best sipped on the comfy, oversized leather couch in the front of the bar.

Addiction: The sweet red wine sangria topped off with guava nectar (\$5) and the margarita made with silver tequila and Grand Marnier (\$8).

Endearing quirk: Stop in Monday nights to find folks lining the bar trying their hand at the lost art of dominoes.

Crisp

2940 N. Broadway, 877-693-8653

In January, small Lakeview storefront Crisp began serving unique, Korean-American on-the-bone fried chicken.

Addiction: We're bonkers for boneless chicken and the Jessica's Boneless Chicken Super Strips (3/\$5.95, 6/\$8.95, 9/\$12.95), a guilty pleasure that was added to the menu in December and really lives up to its, uh, superiority. The tender, juicy chicken becomes even more flavorful thanks to Crisp's homemade Korean BBQ sauce, which is sweet and tangy with the slightest kick.

Quirk: The downside to finger-lickin' goodness: Nearly all of Crisp's seating is, surprisingly, at communal tables, which allows friends and strangers to watch as your tongue pokes around your fingernails for that last speck of sauce.

Yats

955 W. Randolph St. 312-829-7930
Nothing says winter comfort food (to us) like a steaming plate of jambalaya, but we've been hooked on Yats' Cajun menu since the West Loop spot opened in August. And why not? The first Chicago location of this Indiana favorite serves up big portions of tasty, New Orleans-inspired classics at easy-to-swallow prices—\$6.50 for a plate with toast, \$7.50 for a two-entree combo. The uber-friendly staff, loungey dining room and BYOB option are merely the hot sauce on top.

Addiction: Chili cheese etouffee with crawfish (\$6.50). Some like their gumbo with chicken, we like ours with cheese!

Quirk: Yats doles out its food from large pots behind the counter. But hey, if that means our crawfish Creole is ready faster, the school-kitchen vibe doesn't faze us.

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Smoke Daddy
FILE FOR METROMIX

best bets

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**tue
23**

Double trouble

The Smoke Daddy Rhythm and Bar-B-Que, 1804 W. Division St. 773-772-6656.

See two sides of Kris Kringle at the **Good and Bad Santa Holiday Party**. An upstanding Santa doles out candy canes, gift certificates and other treats, while his less-than-virtuous counterpart hands out PBRs, condoms, black licorice and coal. Also features screenings of flicks such as "Elf" and "Bad Santa," plus live jazz and blues at 9 p.m., and half-price wings, \$2 glasses of spiced eggnog and \$3 drafts. 7 p.m. No cover.

Rebel with a Claus

Stone Lotus, 873 N. Orleans St. 312-440-9680.

Santa shows his, uh, gentle side at the fourth annual **Naughty Santa Christmas Party**, where a not-so-saintly Nick appears with dancers from Scores, Pink Monkey, VIP's and other gentlemen's clubs. DJs Victor R. and Jesse Seely spin. 10 p.m. \$20. No cover with RSVP before midnight; \$10 after. RSVP: faith@stonelotuslounge.com

**wed
24**

Season's eatings

Ann Sather, 909 W. Belmont Ave. 773-348-2378.

If you'd rather trim a tree than a turkey, go out for your holiday meal. Ann Sather Lakeview offers a no-fuss **three-course Christmas menu** with entrees such as turkey with celery-sage stuffing, baked ham with sweet potatoes and prime rib with mashed potatoes. Limited a la carte breakfast selections also are available. 11 a.m. Through Thursday. \$17.95. Reservations are accepted for parties of six or more.

**thu
25**

House of love

Crobar, 1543 N. Kingsbury St. 312-266-1900.

Who needs mistletoe when **Lil' Louis** is in town? The Chicago-born DJ and producer spins house music and shares the love with complimentary copies of his new memoir, "A Man's Diary," and double album, "Two Sides to Every Story." The book chronicles Louis' search for a soul mate, while the companion CD features songs written from a female perspective. 10 p.m. \$25.

**fri
26**

Trash talk

Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, 2430 N. Cannon Drive. 773-755-5100.

When it comes to Christmas, green is the new white. Case in point: **Trash to Treasure**. Bring in your leftover wrapping paper to create a mural that will hang on the wall of the museum. You also can make your own design to take home—or give as a last-minute gift. 11 a.m. Through Jan. 4. Free.

HOW TO REACH US | FOR ENTERTAINMENT INFORMATION 24/7, GO TO METROMIX.COM.

Metromix is published Monday through Saturday as part of RedEye, an edition of the Chicago Tribune.

For questions, comments and story ideas, contact Matt McGuire, editor, at mmcguire@tribune.com

To submit event information for Metromix or metromix.com, go to metromix.com/listings.



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\$7 domestic pitchers, beer pong, karaoke; 13 W. Division St. 312-266-0944.

CAFE FRESCO
Half-price glasses of wine with food purchase, \$4 vodka lemonades; 1202 W. Grand Ave. 312-733-6378.

CINNERS
\$2 well drinks; 4757 N. Talman Ave. 773-654-1624.

DELILAH'S
\$2 Canadian Club cocktails, \$2 Point Pale Ale pints; 2771 N. Lincoln Ave. 773-472-2771.

THE FIFTY/50
\$2 Mickey's Hand Grenades, \$4 312 and Goose Island IPA drafts; 2047 W. Division St. 773-489-5050.

FIVE STAR BAR
\$1 tacos, \$2 Schlitz cans; 1424 W. Chicago Ave. 312-850-2555.

THE GRAND CENTRAL
\$1 tacos (minimum three), \$2 margaritas, \$3 Corona bottles; 950 W. Wrightwood Ave. 773-832-4000.

HAWKEYE'S
\$3.25 MGD 64 bottles, \$4.25 Newcastle bottles; 1458 W. Taylor St. 312-226-3951.

HIDEOUT
\$2.50 Berghoff bottles, \$3 Newcastle drafts; 1354 W. Wabansia Ave. 773-227-4433.

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7 p.m. Free. The Celtic Knot Public House, 626 Church St., Evanston. 847-864-1679.

COREY WILKES
9:30 p.m. Cover varies. The Velvet Lounge, 67 E. Cermak Rd. 312-791-9050.

DEE ALEXANDER QUARTET
8 and 10 p.m. Cover varies. Jazz Showcase, 806 S. Plymouth Ct. 312-360-0234.

DEEP BLUE ORGAN TRIO
9 p.m. \$6. Green Mill, 4802 N. Broadway. 773-878-5552.

DEVIL IN A WOODPILE
9:30 p.m. Free. Hideout, 1354 W. Wabansia Ave. 773-227-4433.

ERIN MCDOUGALD JAZZ QUARTET
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HARMONICA HINDS
9:30 p.m. \$10. Buddy Guy's Legends, 754 S. Wabash Ave. 312-427-0333.

JOE BARR, JOANNA CONNOR
9:30 p.m. \$12. Kingston Mines, 2548 N. Halsted St. 773-477-4646.

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8:30 p.m. \$7. Elbo Room, 2871 N. Lincoln Ave. 773-549-5549.

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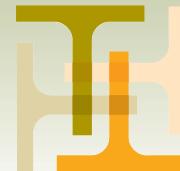


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¹ Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2008-09 Edition

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THE NEW FACE OF KEYSHIA

Songstress Cole gets in touch with her sexy side

Associated Press

NEW YORK Heartbreaking, emotional songs like "Love" and "I Remember" helped make Keyshia Cole one of R&B's most popular stars. But while those songs resonate with millions of fans, the soul sensation says she can't stand to listen to them anymore.

Cole says she's tired of singing those same old sad love songs. So on her new CD, "A Different Me," released this month, Cole introduces her "sexier" side.

Currently on tour with Lil Wayne and Gym Class Heroes, the 27-year-old diva—who also is a big reality star thanks to her successful BET show "Keyshia Cole: The Way It Is"—says she's changing her stage performance and hopes to gain worldwide appeal.

On the opening track of the new CD, you introduce your "sexier" side. What does that mean exactly?

Just the mood of some of the music, and also the pictures that I took for the album packaging were a little bit sexier than normal. It's a lot lighter and sexier, you can listen to it and it's not so heartbroken and painful.

Do you feel sexier now than before?

I just think that sexier is, I guess, the clothes that you're wearing. I've always been a young lady, but I just chose to do certain things or look a certain way before. I really did like the fact that I work really hard to make it here. It's just a sexier or softer side of myself that I chose to put forth and show the world. I think it's always been there, it's just the point of bringing it out and being comfortable with yourself.

Talk about the songwriting process when

recording the new CD.

With "Love," after I wrote that song, I couldn't listen to it; I still can't listen to "Love," I just can't. Like I don't even listen to my own albums, which is bad because I really need to do that because I perform them all the time.

It's just that after I write it, and I felt that way and I remember that way, it's hard for me to go back and really listen to it because I hate feeling that way. But I perform those songs almost every night so it's something that I have to take myself back to and remember that feeling and project that feeling to the world.

But that's why I went with the "A Different Me" title because I am a traveling performer and a growing entertainer and I wanted to switch up the music and change it up and give it a different vibe because I don't want to be on the same vibe every night singing the same type of song.

Is it going to be easier to perform the new songs because the material is lighter?

I'll see. Hopefully it brings a wider base of a crowd for me to perform in front of. To get that arena audience, I felt like I had to switch it up just a little tiny bit, and touch [on] different [subject] matters in relationships, just on a worldwide basis.

What else are you doing differently?

I definitely changed choreographers, I switched my band up, I revamped my whole staging and just rehearsing and working at that because I never really incorporated a bunch of dance moves or choreography on the stage, but now I'm trying new things. I just want to live up to the title "A Different Me."



GETTY IMAGES FILE

Keyshia Cole

"I Am Music" tour, with Lil Wayne, T-Pain, Gym Class Heroes and Keri Hilson.

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pop



Grappling roles with Mickey

On boxing vs. wrestling: "Boxing and wrestling are as different as fencing and rugby, except that you're in a ring with four corners. Boxing, you go in there to inflict as much damage as possible, without anybody trying to see your punches. For me, with 15, 16 years of boxing training, it took a month to unlearn it all [for the filming of 'The Wrestler']. It takes these guys five, seven years to learn how to fall the right way, to take the slams. First time somebody threw me up, I was in the [expletive] doctor's office and couldn't move my [expletive] back, my vertebrae [expletive] got all [expletive] exploded. Then it was the knee; then it was the neck. It gave me a new kind of respect for a sport I had no respect for."

On starting over:

"For a while there [in the dark years before 'The Wrestler'] I needed ... to get away, to just ... I had too much crap going on in my life. I just needed to step away, and the boxing helped, and I continued with the therapy, and cleaning house, let's say. And starting over again. I didn't know it was going to take me 13 years, but what are you going to do. I was really bad for a long time, and it wasn't anybody's fault except mine." **TRIBUNE**



'WRESTLER' MANIA

Awards buzz, comeback surround Rourke's new role

Los Angeles Times

The eyes are the same. Say what you will about Mickey Rourke's face—ravaged by time, battered by boxing and altered by who knows what else—but his eyes haven't changed. They still have the live-wire flash, moving from cocky charm to wounded pride to raw pain in an instant. Watching those eyes brings to mind the Mickey Rourke who once was, the guy from "Diner" and "The Pope of Greenwich Village" and "Year of the Dragon," the Brando of the early '80s.

In "The Wrestler," which opens Thursday, Rourke makes what is likely his last best go at regaining the respect and acclaim he walked away from to pursue a boxing career, a last shot at a comeback after years of self-destructive behavior and forgettable movies. Rourke's role as a once top-billed professional wrestler now struggling even for gigs in high school gymnasiums and grappling with age, injuries and personal demons was tailored specifically to the actor.

"People have asked me for a long time, 'What's the best movie you ever made?'" Rourke says during a recent inter-

FAST-PAISED

!!!! **The Wrestler**

Years removed from his glory days as a professional wrestler, Randy "The Ram" Robinson (Mickey Rourke) works in a grocery store and nurses a crush on a stripper (Marisa Tomei). With the opportunity for a rematch 20 years after his bout with the Ayatollah, the Ram works to get into fighting shape and attempts to reconnect with his estranged daughter (Evan Rachel Wood).

The buzz: There are more than a few parallels between the self-destructive Ram and Rourke, who's landed his juiciest part in

20 years. That could be why there's already lots of talk about him not just landing a best actor Oscar nod, but maybe even winning.

The verdict: A strong shot at becoming a sports movie classic. The plot of "The Wrestler" doesn't go anywhere unexpected, but Rourke discovers surprising depth in a man that has plenty going on underneath his tough exterior. Great stories are all in the details, and "The Wrestler" feels so rich and lived-in that its standard setups turn into universal truths.

MATT PAIS IS THE METROMIX MOVIE CRITIC.

view in L.A. "And I'd say, 'I haven't made it yet.' Somebody asks me now, I say, 'The Wrestler.'"

Director Darren Aronofsky, himself making a comeback of sorts following the tortured "The Fountain," conceived the role for Rourke,

even though the two had never met. Perhaps mutually wary of the other's reputation, their first meeting involved a few ground rules.

"We met at a restaurant for lunch and he told me how I'd screwed up my career for 15 years," Rourke says, "and I agreed with him.

Where he's been

This isn't Mickey Rourke's first take at a comeback. He's slowly been making his way back for years. There were small roles in films made by friends, scene-stealing turns in Sean Penn's "The Pledge" and "The Rainmaker" for Francis Ford Coppola (who earlier directed Rourke in one of his most iconic roles in "Rumble Fish"). Then Rourke landed supporting parts for Tony Scott in "Man on Fire" and "Domino," alongside appearances in Robert Rodriguez's "Once Upon a Time in Mexico" and "Sin City." That role in "Sin City," in particular, as a brokenhearted enforcer named Marv, brought Rourke a new level of exposure and acclaim, in some ways setting the stage for his full return in "The Wrestler." **L.A. TIMES**



FOX SEARCHLIGHT

He said he had a project he'd like to do with me but he couldn't raise any money because of the state of my career. He said, 'If I work with you, you have to do everything I say and you can never disrespect me on the set. And I can't pay you.' And I thought, 'And he's got [guts] too. This is my kind of guy.'"

Following months of weight training and learning the ins-and-outs of wrestling, Rourke had added an extra 46 pounds of muscle to his already imposing frame in preparation for the part of Randy "The Ram" Robinson. Aronofsky allowed Rourke to rewrite much of his dialogue, revising it to match his own emotions and experiences. When Randy the Ram delivers a touchingly sincere speech to the crowd—about how much their support and being a player in the wrestling ring has meant to him—before the film's climactic match, Rourke says the words express his own feelings toward Hollywood.

The onetime bad boy actor known for

being difficult on set and his taste for hard and lavish living has spent years in therapy while staying in cheap apartments, coming to terms with his personal and professional failures. The triumph of his turn in "The Wrestler" is made all the better by acknowledging just how far he had fallen.

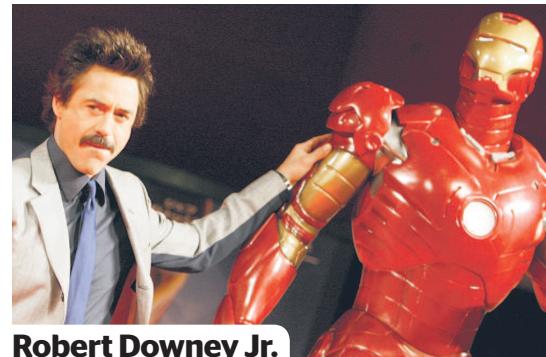
"Look, I had a career and I threw it away," says Rourke, whose past includes an arrest on spousal abuse charges, which were later dropped, and a DUI. "I wasn't accountable for anything and I didn't take responsibility. I was unprofessional. There were things I blamed on the system or other people but it was Mickey Rourke who screwed everything up, not Hollywood or any director or producer.

"Not until I lost everything in my life that meant anything to me that I loved or cared about, could I look in the mirror and go, 'It's you.' When you're finally able to do that, you're in a lonely, dark place, because only you can get you out of that."

Comeback kids

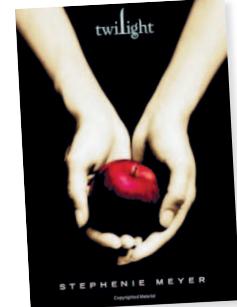
By Ryan Smith FOR REDEYE

America loves a good comeback. How else can you explain John Travolta's post-"*Pulp Fiction*" career, the buzz about Britney's new album and the popularity of nearly every sports movie ever made? (Except ironically, the 2007 movie "*The Comebacks*.") That's also why Hollywood is excited about Mickey Rourke's new movie, "*The Wrestler*"—it's a movie about a wrestler trying to make a comeback played by an actor trying to make a comeback. With that in mind, here's a look at some other recent comebacks in pop culture: **AP CONTRIBUTED**



Robert Downey Jr.

Quick quiz: Who was the biggest action hero in 2008? Vin Diesel, Jason Statham or a troubled 43-year-old actor who once played Charlie Chaplin? The answer is, indeed, Robert Downey Jr., and it's a surprising one considering a few years ago, the former Brat Packer was known more for his off-screen troubles with drugs, failed rehab stints and prison time than his film roles. But after his critically acclaimed turns as the world's strongest can-opener in "Iron Man" and an actor wearing blackface in "Tropic Thunder," Downey is back on the A-list.



Vampires

OK, so maybe these mythical bloodsuckers never exactly went away, but with the popularity of the tweener-friendly "*Twilight*" books and movie combined with the buzz of HBO's quirky new show "*True Blood*," vampires are truly resurrected this year in pop culture.



'SNL'

The NBC sketch-comedy show returned to sharp political satire this year—and the payoff was big. Dogged by dwindling ratings, "*SNL*" experienced a much-needed boost, finding inspiration in the presidential campaign and a savior in the multitalented Tina Fey. Fey's spot-on impression of Republican vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin helped resurrect the show as appointment TV for viewers who couldn't get enough of her winking send-up of the Alaskan governor. Time will tell if "*SNL*" can continue its winning streak. If the sketches are able to mine laughs from an Obama administration, then you betcha.



McDonald's

A few years ago Morgan Spurlock made a documentary that helped turn McDonald's into a dirty word. But with the economy down, people are headed toward the Golden Arches more than ever (hello, \$1 McDouble). Add that to a little image makeover and a decision to make espressos and the like for its new McCafe and all of a sudden, Ronald and Co. are feeling frisky enough to take on Starbucks on their home turf. Supersize that!



New Kids on the Block

The Boston-bred boy band had the right stuff for gaggles of girls in the late '80s, but went the way of the mall tour when a new kid known as grunge showed up. But the "kids" (pushing 40 these days) came to cash in on some Gen-Y nostalgia with a reunion album and a summer arena tour, and it seems to be working. "*The Block*" peaked at No. 2 and is still hangin' tough in the *Billboard* 200.



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Coens don't 'Burn' fans



Burn After Reading (R)

DVD, \$16.99; Blu-ray, \$25.99

"Burn After Reading" is one of those strange comedies from Joel and Ethan Coen that is surprising, funny, head-scratching and emotionally distanced. For all its offbeat wit and cinematic flair, "Burn" comes off more as a stylistic exercise than a fully realized movie. That said, a somewhat half-baked film by the Coen brothers is more interesting

than most of what's out there. Frances McDormand and George Clooney are part of a marvelous energetic ensemble cast that includes an amusing Brad Pitt, the formidable Tilda Swinton, and stellar supporting actors Richard Jenkins, J.K. Simmons and John Malkovich. Clooney's Harry Pfarre is a federal agent cheating on his wife, children's author Sandy (Elizabeth Marvel), with Katie (Tilda Swinton), the lawyer wife of a CIA analyst named Osborne Cox (Malkovich). Pitt is Chad, a hard-body trainer at a gym, while McDormand's Linda is some sort of assistant to Jenkins' gym manager, Ted. Their lives will intersect in bizarre and dumb ways. Had the Coens spun the comedy toward silliness instead of tamping it down with irony, the film might have really burned. L.A.

DAILY NEWS



FOCUS FEATURES



The Women

(PG-13)

DVD, \$19.99;
Blu-ray, \$26.99

Remakes are dicey: reinventing a classic a no-win situation. If you're not looking for a classic and will settle for something vaguely amusing and sitcomish, this latest incarnation will pass the time. The story circles around Mary (Meg Ryan), the wife of a rich financial type who finds out that her husband is having an affair with the younger and less-well-off Crystal (Eva Mendes), who works retail at Saks Fifth Avenue. L.A. DAILY NEWS



Death Race (R)

DVD, \$20.99;
Blu-ray, \$26.99

If a movie could drag its knuckles on the ground, this one would. The film, starring Jason Statham as an ex-con, is supposedly based on the 1975 cult favorite "Death Race 2000," which involved a savage cross-country road rally in heavily armored cars. It isn't so much a movie as a superheated, highly conductive miracle substance for the pure transmission of masculine aggression and misogyny.

THE WASHINGTON POST

TRINITY
ESTD. 2005

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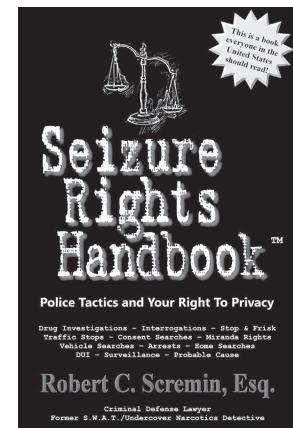
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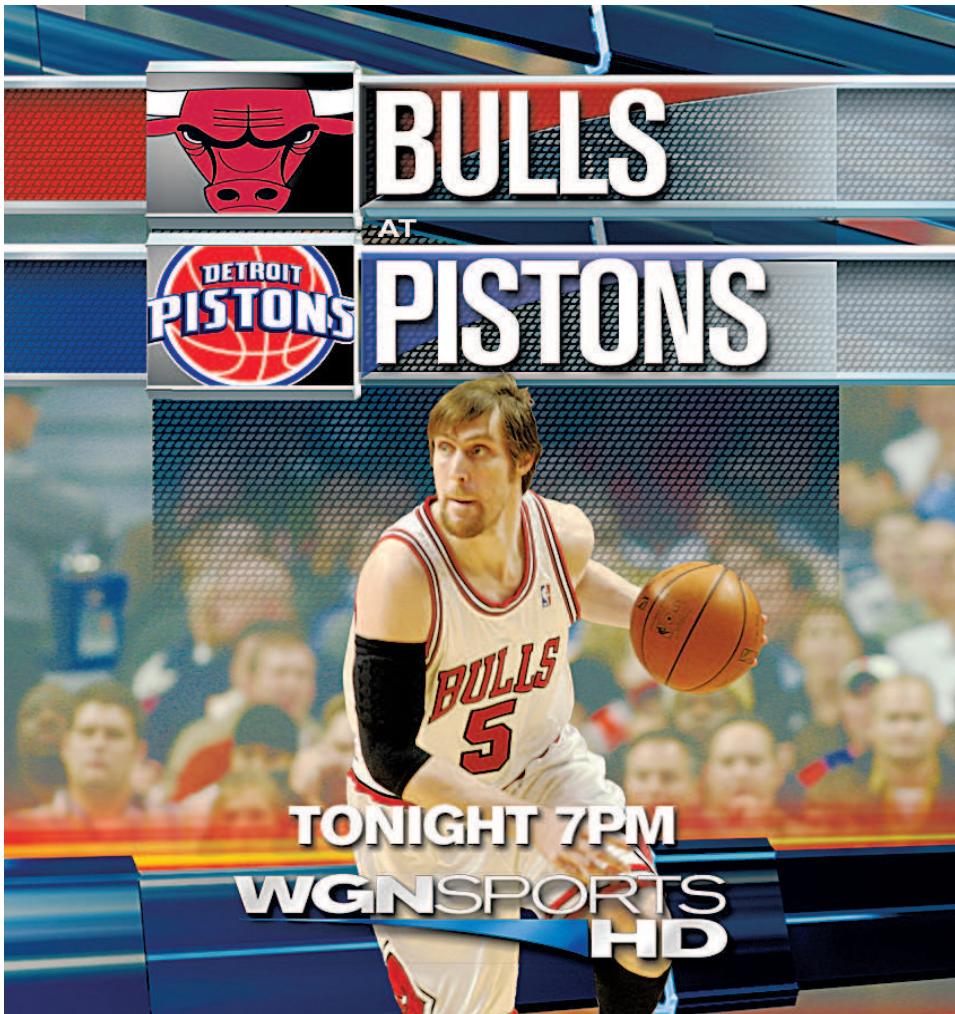
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This 18-carat white gold ring with green tourmaline, yellow beryl, yellow sapphire, pink sapphire and diamonds costs a cool \$15,500. **L.A. TIMES PHOTO**

Tasty eye candy for the holidays

Punch up winter with bold new hues

Los Angeles Times

After the deep and ashen color palette of fall clothing, a surge of hard-candy hues is exploding into holiday jewelry. It's bright, brilliant and dripping with fun and a sense of possibility.

The trend isn't just about strong colors—what's striking is the unexpected mix of shades. A vibrant green peridot meets a smattering of pave pink sapphires on a Suzanne Felsen cocktail ring. A 25-carat pink tourmaline shines like a berry-bright flashlight from the center of a Martin Katz ring. And mandarin garnets and yellow sapphires glow in Van Cleef & Arpels' Mandarin collection, which echoes the orange that was all over the spring runways.

Of course, that 25-carat ring and those other oh-so-eye-popping pieces have price tags with as many zeros as there are facets on the stones. We don't know too many people who are actually going to line up for a \$34,000 bauble.

But the intense Jolly Rancher palette of the high-end fantasy gems is informing accessories at all other price points. Whether you can manage \$30,000 or just \$30, the trend is

color, color, color.

"People want something different and refreshing," jewelry designer Felsen says about the season's bright gems. "You see color in clothes and architecture all the time. Colorful jewelry is an evolution of that."

Freedom by Topshop plays out the newest combinations in fun accessories that marry orange, blue, pink and green all in one necklace or ring.

H&M takes the fantasy one step further, putting color on flowers and bugs entwined on a twist of chains. And a large blue "stone" on a \$2.90 cocktail ring might not have the luster of the real thing, but it's a bright alternative for tapping into the spirit of the season.

You can also let an uplifting mix of colors spill into clothing and makeup. Throw a vivid fuchsia cashmere scarf over a black sweater or sweep a thin line of electric blue eyeliner across your lid for a festive New Year's look. The idea is to get playful, push the limits of the color you wear and experiment with how you wear it. Let a shock, even a jumble, of color—on a gem-toned dress that will carry you from the holidays right through spring, or on actual gems, fine or faux—add some optimism and cheer.

That's something we'll all need in the new year.

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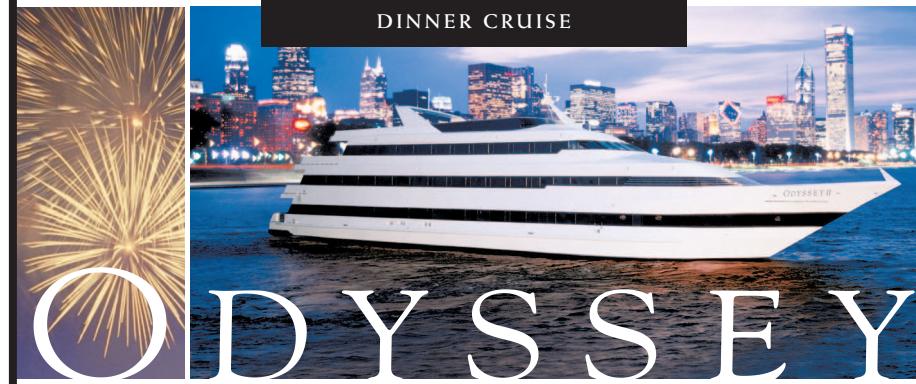
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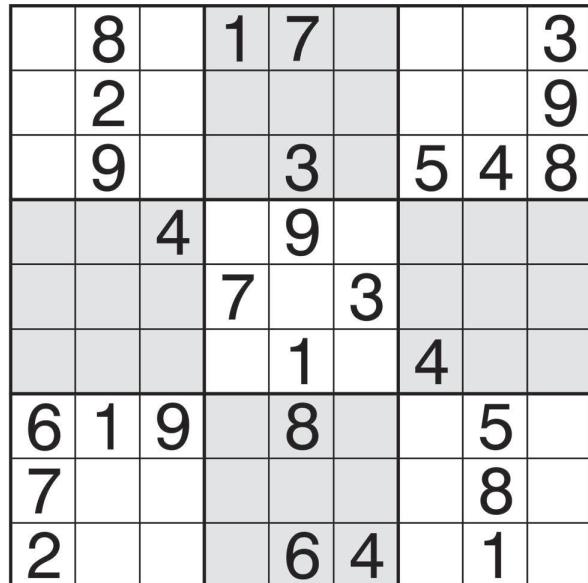
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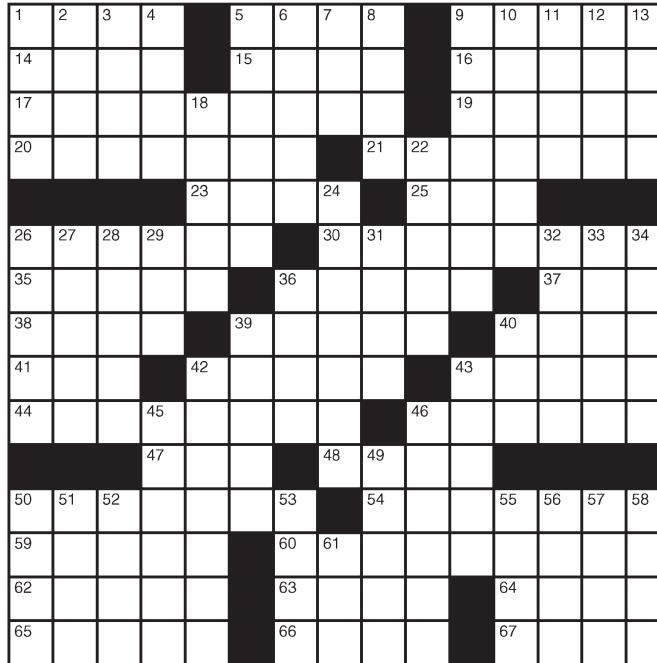
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5 Run smoothly
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19 Green years
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25 Obtain
26 Teems
30 Oilier
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36 Discourage
37 Dundee negative
38 Stratford's river
39 Religious figure
40 Arizona city
41 Comic Skelton
42 __ by (just managing)
43 Whittled
44 Infringement
46 To some extent
47 Natural cavity
48 High, rocky crags
50 Contrives
54 Verbatim
59 Essential acid
60 Alert
62 Ate lavishly
63 Novelist Murdoch
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66 Encounter
67 Tear

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Hot or not?

Not to be cliche, but baby it is cold outside! ¶ (OK, that was really cliche. But give us a break, we're freezing our buns off here!) Anywho, with the weather being what it is, visions of bundled celebs are dancing in our heads. ¶ Check out how these famous folks braced for frigid—and not so frigid—temps.



Brad Pitt
The look Pitt came wrapped in a big ol' scarf at the London screening of Angelina Jolie's "Changeling" last month.



Diddy
The look The rap mogul was serious about his fur-trimmed coat at a New York screening of "Cadillac Records" this month.



Mary-Kate Olsen
The look Olsen was all about the animal print with her multicolored scarf at a New York screening of "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button" this month.

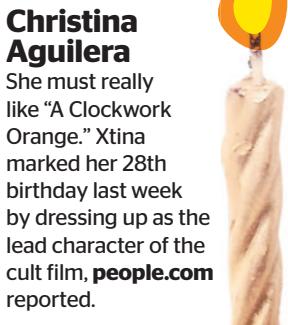


Kanye West
The look West rocked what looks like an animal pelt of some kind at a party in L.A. this month.



Katie Holmes
The look Holmes was all right in white as she signed autographs in New York on Sunday.

CELEBRATIONS | YOU SAY IT'S YOUR BIRTHDAY, IT'S THEIR BIRTHDAY TOO.



Christina Aguilera

She must really like "A Clockwork Orange." Xtina marked her 28th birthday last week by dressing up as the lead character of the cult film, people.com reported.

Jake Gyllenhaal

Also turning 28, he and his girlfriend Reese Witherspoon went out for a romantic three-hour dinner date at an Italian restaurant in Santa Monica, Calif., on Friday, usmagazine.com reports.

Holly Madison and Criss Angel

They threw a joint celebration last week, first by going to Disneyland and then Sin City on Friday, E! Online reports. Angel turned 41 on Friday; Madison is 29 on Tuesday. They blew out the candles on their cake with 50 friends.

Owen opens up

Owen Wilson has come a long way since that period of despair that led to an alleged suicide attempt in August 2007. In an interview with The Philadelphia Inquirer, the "Marley & Me" star talked about what helped him get his life back on track. "They tell you that you have to do it yourself. ... But it's also family and friends that help you get your mind straight," he said.

Mama's boy

Mama Seacrest has a message for her son, Ryan: Get out and meet someone! "I wish he had more time to date," Connie Seacrest tells momlogic.com. "That would be wonderful for him—and we'd stand a better chance for him to have a relationship." Ryan, meanwhile, has a new unscripted "reality" dating show for NBC, "Momma's Boys."

Holiday helper

David Spade is in a giving mood. The actor and one-time Phoenix resident donated \$100,000 to the Phoenix Police Department so that the department can buy 50 rifles for patrol officers. Spade said he was inspired to make the donation after seeing a TV news report about Phoenix officers having to buy their own rifles.



Jennifer Aniston and John Mayer

The look

The on-again-off-again couple opted for traditional black coats as they strolled together in New York on Friday.

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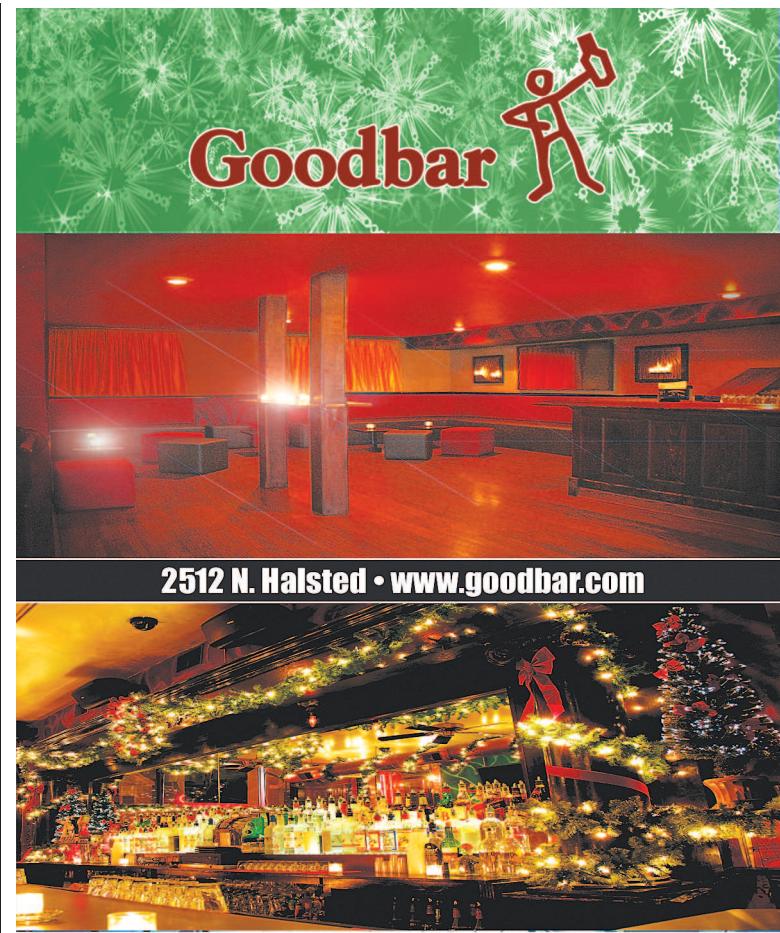
Celebrity twin

Do you look like a celebrity? Show us! Send your picture along with the name of the celeb who shares your style to dlhernandez@tribune.com. For Tuesday, we have Jaime Romero. Think he's a ringer for Michael Phelps? Text "jaime" and the number of your opinion to 47383. You'll get the poll results instantly.



Romero

Phelps



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FOX news



Jackman



Depp

Forget 2008. Movie Web site Fandango already has moved on, crowning Megan Fox its sexiest woman of 2009, based on a nationwide poll of users, accesshollywood.com reported.

The "Transformers" heroine is set to star next year in Diablo Cody's slasher film, "Jennifer's Body," and reprise her role in "Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen."

When it came to sexiest man, men picked Hugh Jackman; women went for Johnny Depp. Jackman will return as Wolverine in summer's "X-Men Origins: Wolverine." Depp's '09 projects include "The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus" and "Public Enemies."

Super shaver

The bird's nest masquerading as "Twilight" star Robert Pattinson's hair is no more. Pattinson now sports a crew cut much shorter and more orderly than the scattered hair that made him a tween icon as he promoted the box office-topping vampire movie this fall, paparazzi photos show.

(We now pause to let "Twigholters" squeal at shockingly loud decibel levels.) It's unclear why Pattinson decided on the change. All we know is that his hair no longer looks like, well, this ...

Pattinson
AP FILEMegan Fox
GETTY IMAGES FILE

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Shear genius?

What do you think of Robert Pattinson's new 'do? Text "do" and the number of your answer to **47383**. You'll get the poll results instantly.

1. Yay—It's about time he chopped off that floppy hair.
2. Nay—Hate it! Bring back the floppy hair!

Ronson
GETTY IMAGES FILE

SamRo back home

The holiday stress seems to have caught up with Samantha Ronson. Lindsay Lohan's other half checked in to an L.A. hospital on Sunday due to exhaustion, E! News reported.

LiLo was by her side, according to E!

The DJ, who's back home and catching up with her favorite shows, blogged about what happened on MySpace.

"Thanks for all your messages, I'm home and all good," she wrote on her blog. "[I] was just pretty exhausted from traveling and working too much."

A show with bite

What could be funnier than a TV dramedy about four women who live in New York and turn into werewolves every time there's a full moon? Answer: The name Fox has given it: "Bitches."

According to The Hollywood Reporter, "Bitches" is in development with the writing team of Gretchen Berg and Aaron Harberts, who were co-executive producers of ABC's "Pushing Daisies," and feature writer Michael Dougherty.



T-Pain

T-Pain gone country?

Hip-hopper and top-hat lover T-Pain may follow in the footsteps of Nelly's successful "Over and Over" collaboration—by hitting the studio with country star Tim McGraw.



McGraw

Pain, talking to E! Online, said he got the idea after meeting McGraw on the set of "SNL" last month.

"The hip-hop has been done with Tim and Nelly, so we gotta be more country than hip-hop," Pain said of the possible studio team-up. RedEye awaits word on whether McGraw will get all auto-tuned out for the track.

\$3 million

Amount comedy site Funny or Die raised in cash from a single, undisclosed investor, according to Reuters.